



**DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY
&
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
M E M O R A N D U M**

DATE: June 6, 2008
TO: Ray Giometti, Planning Commission Chair
Members of the Planning Commission
FROM: Kris Sorensen, Assistant Planner
SUBJECT: CPA# 2008-M-02: Business Overlays

ISSUE

Do the existing Commercial Arterial and Business District Overlay Regulations achieve the adopted purpose of the Overlay Regulations?

BACKGROUND

One element of this Comprehensive Plan Amendment process is to streamline Business District standards as current applicable standards have created difficulties for both developers and city staff to administer and apply. This memorandum is written to support the workshop discussion that will occur at Planning Commission, with a focus on current applicable development standards for development in Business Districts, and options for developing more efficient and effective standards. The following sections provide background on options for streamlining standards, improving standards, and where current standards fall short.

PURPOSE AND GOAL OF BUSINESS DISTRICTS

The purpose of Business District and related development standards, as stated in the Renton Municipal Code (RMC) 4-3-040, are to “*guide the redevelopment of strip commercial urban forms into more concentrated urban forms, provide for design guidelines for residential development within the district, enhance the pedestrian environment, make the commercial environment more attractive, improve the City’s tax base, and result in a more successful business district.*” Development standards assist in forming the look and feel of an area. In contrast to the typical suburban development form in these Business Districts where single use one-story buildings are set back on lots, future development and redevelopment of properties in these districts will be closer to streets, multi-story with residential above ground floor uses, and allow for greater pedestrian mobility.

The task at the workshop session will be to identify whether the existing regulations adequately implement the purpose of the Business District.

STREAMLINING DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

One of the goals of this amendment is to streamline development standards for Business Districts. Currently, there are multiple sections of the RMC that apply. As shown above, development projects without residential elements must conform to Commercial Arterial standards in RMC 4-2-120A and additional Business District standards in RMC 4-3-040E. If a project has dwelling units, either as a stand alone residential structure or as a mixed use (commercial and residential) structure, the project must meet Commercial Arterial and Business District standards as well as Urban Design Regulations District B standards as found in RMC 4-3-100.

Attachment A for this memorandum is a matrix of all applicable development standards for all uses allowed in Business Districts. The matrix shows the three applicable municipal code sections that can be applied. Questions are posed in the right column that will be part of the workshop discussion. The discussion will address how current regulations work for different types of projects and where there may be opportunities to improve standards and improve the efficiency of code. In addition, we will identify gaps in regulations.

CONSOLIDATING MULTIPLE STANDARDS

There are a few options to consolidate applicable standards and strengthen Business District standards to get the desired development pattern sought after as described in the Comprehensive Plan. The underlying Commercial Arterial zone standards will always apply unless a new zone is created like a mixed use zone or business district zone. Creating a new zone may be too extensive of a process and not the correct option. Another option for consolidation is to move applicable Design Regulations into the Business District standards or move Business District standards into Design Regulations. An additional option could be to create a new Design District for Business Districts only. Part of this discussion is to create reasoning for which option is best.

If the current Business District standards were to be added to and improved to create a streamlined standard, what are the elements of a development proposal that should be regulated considering the goals of creating a robust business environment and pedestrian friendly mixed use area? The elements regulated through current design regulations can provide a framework for Business Districts. Elements in the Urban Design Regulation Districts are:

- Site Design and Building Location
- Parking and Vehicular Access
- Pedestrian Environment
- Landscaping/Recreation Areas/Common Open Space
- Building Architectural Design
- Signage
- Lighting

GAPS IN CURRENT DISTRICT STANDARDS:

- Building orientation
- Building entries

- Connections to adjacent properties
- Fencing and barriers between sites
- Circulation
- Shared vehicular access
- Blank walls
- Allowing more height
- Parking requirement's impact on reaching higher densities
- Floor Area Ratio (FAR) standards: minimum and maximum

ATTACHMENTS

- A: Matrix Worksheet: Related Municipal Code
- B: Related Comprehensive Plan Land Use Element Policies
- C: Related Comprehensive Plan Community Design Element Policies